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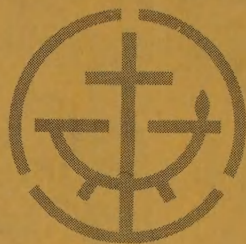


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THE APOSTOLIC DECREE

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The Apostolic Decree

Acts XV. (20—29).

Von

D. W. Sanday,

Professor der Theologie in Oxford.

LEIPZIG.

A. Deichert'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Nachf.

(Georg Böhme).

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The Apostolic Decree
(Acts XV. 20—29).

Von

W. Sanday.

A mong the problems raised by the Acts of the Apostles there is perhaps none that has been so obstinately contested and that seems to be still so far from a definitive solution as the so-called Apostolic Decree (Aposteldekret); and at the present moment it is rather markedly in the foreground. Not only have we had two elaborate monographs recently devoted to it: Gotthold Resch, *Das Aposteldekret nach seiner ausserkanonischen Textgestalt untersucht* (Leipzig, 1905; *Texte und Untersuchungen, Neue Folge* XIII. 3); and Alfred Seeberg, *Die beiden Wege und das Aposteldekret* (Leipzig, 1906); we have also from a Roman Catholic scholar a monograph on the general subject with which the Decree is concerned, Böckenhoff, *Das apostolische Speisegesetz* (1903). The distinguished scholar to whom these essays are dedicated treated the question of the text with his usual thoroughness and mastery (*Einleitung*, 11. 344—346, 349, 353f.). And now the subject assumes a prominent place in Harnack's new volume on the Acts in *Beiträge zur Einleitung in d. N. T.* III (Leipzig, 1908). This last, if I may say so, has a special interest for me, as it has for many others of us on this side the water, because it marks a distinct step of rapprochement towards the general view of the Acts which prevails in this country, as it does also I believe in the circles represented in this volume. It is true that Harnack himself at the end of his book (p. 224f.), while noting the fact of this rapprochement, is careful to guard against the idea that it goes further than it does. Perhaps, before I have done, I may be allowed to return to this point; for the present I only refer to it as explaining the peculiar interest which we in England have taken in

the writer's latest utterances — the three parts of the series of *Beiträge* dealing with the same group of subjects.

Of the episodes in this latest volume there is none more important than that devoted to the Apostolic Decree. It forms part of the examination of the nature and historical value of one of the leading sources between which the author divides that part of the history of the Acts at which St. Luke was not himself personally present, the so-called „antiochenisch-jerusalemische Quelle“ (VI. I—VIII 4; XI. 19—30; XII. 25; XIII. I—XV. 35). This source as a whole he estimates highly; in fact he finds in it only one considerable flaw, the Apostolic Decree (p. 188). It is in this way that the Decree comes up for discussion; and the result of the discussion is that the difficulty is removed by the adoption of a reading, not hitherto recognized in critical editions of the Acts (except the special edition of Blass), which can be so interpreted as to take out the sting from the objections brought against it.

Really the questions involved are three: (1) as to the reading or readings; (2) as to the interpretation; (3) as to the historicity of the Decree.

(1) The Question of Reading. — The question of reading has been discussed so often and so fully, and the statement of authorities is so easily accessible, that it would be superfluous to repeat it at length. At the same time it will be well for us to have the alternatives distinctly before the eye, and not only vaguely before the mind. I will therefore begin by setting down these alternatives; and I will do so under the accepted technical names, Eastern and Western, though it is understood that these names are only conventional. We have then the following:

Eastern text:

Acts XV. 20 ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ τῆς πορνείας καὶ πνικτοῦ καὶ τοῦ αἵματος.

XV. 29 ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ πορνείας, ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράττετε. Ἐρρωσθε.

XXI. 25 φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς τό τε εἰδωλόθυτον καὶ αἷμα καὶ πνικτὸν καὶ πορνείαν.

Western text:

Acts XV. 20. ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ τῆς πορνείας [om καὶ πνικτοῦ] καὶ τοῦ αἵματος, καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλουσιν ἑαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι ἑτέροις μὴ ποιεῖν [the Golden Rule].

XV. 29, ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος [om καὶ πνικτῶν] καὶ πορνείας, καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλετε ἑαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι ἑτέρῳ μὴ ποιεῖν [the Golden Rule], ἅφ' ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράττετε, φερόμενοι ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι. ἔρωσθε.

XXI. 25. φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς τό τε εἰδωλόθυτον καὶ αἷμα [om. καὶ πνικτὸν] καὶ πορνείαν.

The crucial points are: (a) the insertion (Eastern) or omission (Western) of καὶ πνικτοῦ [πνικτῶν]; (b) the insertion (Western) or omission (Eastern) of the Golden Rule; (c) the addition (Western) or omission (Eastern) of φερόμενοι ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι.

Do the several points hang together, in such a way that we must take them all or reject them all? Or can they be taken singly and a composite text be constructed, partly Eastern and partly Western, with any probability that it represents the original?

Broadly speaking — very broadly speaking — the authorities for and against all the readings are the same: that is to say, there is a strong nucleus of authorities on either side which is practically identical — D, Iren. Tert. for the Western readings, and the great mass of Greek uncials for the Eastern.

But if we are to assume complete solidarity between the two groups — in other words, that they stand or fall together, and that the wrong readings, whichever they are, all came in at the same time — then the question settles itself at once. For we may say with confidence that the Golden Rule, inserted where it is, cannot be original; because it breaks the connexion between the relative ἅφ' ὧν and its antecedents, and so makes the whole sentence impossible.

It is however a tenable view that the Golden Rule was not introduced at the same time as the other variants that go with

it. Both Zahn and Harnack suppose that it was not, though on different grounds and in connexion with opposed results. Zahn's reason is that traces of the Rule are found not only in the Western authorities but also in Aristides (c. 140 A. D.) and Theophilus of Antioch (c. 180 A. D.) and two other authorities — which however may all to this extent be Western —, while it is wanting in Tertullian. It is however very doubtful whether Aristides and Theophilus are really quoting from the Acts and have not rather in their minds some form of current catechism like the Two Ways (so Seeberg). Harnack naturally sees that if the insertion of the Golden Rule is of a piece with the rest, it is fatal to his theory; and he therefore falls back upon the supposition that the group of readings was formed at two stages: the other Western readings are for him original, and the Golden Rule came in later. In face of the silence of Tertullian we must allow the possibility of both hypotheses, though for myself I am more inclined to think the Western readings really of a piece and really in all cases secondary; and it must not be forgotten that, if that is so, *cadit quaestio*.

In any case I suppose it is agreed that the third reading (c) „being prospered [lit. carried along as by a fair breeze] by the Holy Spirit“ is spurious, though it is similar in kind to a number of other characteristic Western interpolations. Yet this clause rests upon the fundamental authorities of the group, D Iren. Tert. For myself, I am unable to separate between these readings and others which Blass refers to an earlier edition of the original Acts. In this I understand that Harnack would still agree with me, though Zahn does not.

Looking at the group of readings before us as a whole, I cannot help asking the first named scholar whether he really thinks that it has the appearance of genuineness. If we take it out of its isolation and try to put it into the context of a complete view of the textual history of the Acts, can it be fitted into such a view at all satisfactorily? I have every sympathy with the motive which has set Harnack upon his later train of reasoning and which has led him to revise his earlier verdict; but I cannot help feeling that he has really been too

much carried away by the particular interest of the moment, and that his new conclusions will not bear to be set in a larger frame. It is a caution that I cannot but think should be borne in mind. Readings are not to be judged wholly by themselves, but we need to ask What if the same principles were applied more generally?

It should perhaps just be pointed out that the case before us is not one in which we can apply the principle (a very just one, as I believe) of „Western non-interpolation“. It is indeed possible that, if the omission of καὶ πνικτοῦ [πνικτῶν] had stood alone, recourse might have been had to this principle. I am not sure that it would have been rightly invoked here. The clearest examples occur in a cluster at the end of the Gospel of St. Luke; and there are one or two more that occur sporadically in other parts of the Gospels; but I have not before my mind another example from the Acts. It is a good rule that each book should be judged by itself, and analogous cases should be produced in sufficient number to form an induction.

But, however that may be, the group of readings as a whole — and we have seen that it ought to be taken as a whole — is by no means a case of „non-interpolation“; a single word (with its conjunction) is omitted, and not less than twelve are added. And the additions are, to all appearance, of the sort that are common in the Western texts and that do not commend themselves as genuine.

(2) The Question of Interpretation. — The readings we are considering are a remarkable instance of a complete transformation of meaning following upon a comparatively small change of text. The omission or insertion of καὶ πνικτοῦ [πνικτῶν] makes it possible to put a wholly different construction upon the passage. It is of course this possibility which has seemed to commend the readings of the Western authorities. The wider bearings of the alternatives will be discussed under the next head; but before we pass on to this it will be well to have the alternative senses clearly before us.

If we assume the group of Eastern readings, there can be no doubt as to the general meaning of the Decree; it is an

injunction to avoid certain specified forms of uncleanness, ceremonial or moral. If we assume the Western readings, it may be, and probably is, an injunction to observe certain elementary rules of morals — elementary at least for a Christian conscience, though not so obvious from the point of view of paganism. If we leave out καὶ πνικτοῦ [-τῶν] and insert the Golden Rule, then the Churches for which the decree is intended, or rather the Gentile converts in those Churches, are exhorted to abstain from meats offered in sacrifice to idols (from any participation in idol-sacrifices), from homicide and from fornication, and they are bidden to follow the maxim of not doing to others what they would not like to have done to themselves.

The question at present before us is, which of these two broad meanings is the most consistent with itself and the most natural. But, before we come to closer quarters with these alternatives, there are some ambiguities to be cleared up in the Western readings.

Once more we have to ask whether these readings must be taken together, or whether we can treat them as a gradual growth in which a small original nucleus was afterwards expanded. Let us begin by supposing that the original text was that which is found in the Eastern MSS. with the single omission of καὶ πνικτοῦ [πνικτῶν]. Could this be naturally taken as a lesson in elementary morals? We should have to take αἷμα in the sense of „homicide“; and πορνεία would also be used in its more general sense. We might say in other words, that the Gentile converts were exhorted to observe the substance of the Ten Commandments, the Second (First) Sixth (Fifth) and Seventh (Sixth) being taken summarily as standing for the whole. We ask ourselves at once if this explanation is quite satisfactory. Is it not a rather severe abridgement to make those three Commandments stand for all Ten? We see there why the Golden Rule came to be added. The Three Commandments plus the Golden Rule are a very fair summary of the whole Ten, where the Three Commandments alone seem insufficient. This constitutes a further presumption that the Rule is an integral part of the oldest Western text. But, if it was, that text was more of the nature of an „interpolation“ than a „non-interpolation“.

That is the same thing as saying that the Western text is less, rather than more, probable.

I have so far taken *αἵμα* and *πορνεία* in the sense that from the point of view of the Western text seems to me most natural, as standing for the Sixth (Fifth) and Seventh (Sixth) Commandments. It may however be asked whether this is the best way to take them. The two Commandments of course cover a wide ground. It might however be suggested that perhaps *αἵμα* and *πορνεία* were originally more limited in meaning; that they stood in the first instance for something that was condemned by Jewish opinion but not condemned by pagan, such (e. g.) as the exposure of infants and the laxer morals that were characteristic of paganism. If this were so, there would be the advantage that we should not have to bring in the Golden Rule as part of the oldest Western reading. I can only say against this that I doubt whether *αἵμα* would have been the natural word to choose to describe this restricted form of homicide.

Questions are raised as to the meaning of the word *πικτόν* in the Eastern text; but these may be more conveniently considered under the next head.

(3) The Question of Historicity. — We have seen that the impulse to all these renewed discussions has come from a recognition of the generally good and trustworthy character of the source in which the account of the Apostolic Council and Decree is found. The Eastern text seemed to be an exception to this; and the way out of the difficulty which thus arose seemed to be by adopting the Western text. So far the tendency of the argument in which we have been engaged has been against this text and in favour of the Eastern. But the effect of this is only to throw us back upon the difficulties involved in the Eastern or common text, which are often supposed to be insuperable.

We will take up first the objections brought against the allusion to „things strangled“, which have held a prominent place in the most recent discussions. Gotthold Resch in particular has treated this point with great learning and ability and with considerable confidence in the result at which he thinks

that he has arrived. Really, however, it seems to me (if I may say so) that the result which he has worked out for himself is too hard and fast for the data on which it rests, and that in any case he proves too much for his particular purpose.

He cannot find any evidence — at least any sufficient evidence — that the Jews of the first century objected to the eating of things strangled. So far as objection was taken to this, he thinks that it was at a date considerably later. And it is true that the fundamental passage of the Mosaic law, Leviticus XVII, 10—16, contains no express prohibition of the eating of things strangled. What it does contain is the prohibition of eating blood, or of eating flesh in which the blood has been left. This is based upon the mystical reason that the blood is the life and that to eat the blood of an animal is to absorb its life (cf. Gen. IX, 4). With such a principle deeply ingrained in the Jewish mind it must surely have lain near at hand to entertain scruples on the subject of things strangled. And whether the existence of these scruples could be precisely verified or not, one would have thought it a priori extremely difficult to prove that they did not exist. For myself, I confess that this single passage (or rather, these three passages) in the Acts is sufficient to prove that they did exist. Strange to say, Resch does not appear to see that, even if *πνικτόν* has been wrongly introduced in all three places, still it has to be explained. Even if the reading is a wrong one, the usage must have existed somewhere in order to prompt the reading. Whatever doubt there may be as to other parts of the evidence, there is no doubt at all that the insertion of *καὶ πνικτοῦ* [-*τῶν*] is at least as old as the middle of the second century; and there is certainly no possibility of proving that a usage which obtained in the second century did not also obtain in the first. When Resch thinks that he has disproved the canonical reading, he forgets that he has also to disprove the non-canonical.

But really there is evidence, strictly Jewish in its origin, which, though slightly indirect, is yet (to my mind) quite satisfactory and convincing. I will give this in the form in which it is presented by Prof. A. R. S. Kennedy in his excellent article "Food" in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* II. 1545 f.:

“With the increasing attention to the requirements of the Levitical legislation in matters of ceremonial purity that marked the later pre-Christian period, and the ver-growing eagerness of the Scribes to ‘make a fence round the Torah’ (Aboth, 1, 1), the two termini under discussion gradually assumed other significations widely different from those originally belonging to them. Hence we may assume that in NT times they already possess the significance assigned to them respectively by the authoritative definition of the Mishna In the same treatise (Chullin, 1,2) we read, ‘Any one may slaughter and at any time and with any instrument except a harvest sickle, a saw, etc., because these strangle’ — i. e. they do not make the clean incision required for the proper slaughter. We have here the explanation of the ‘things strangled’ (τοῦ πνικτοῦ), from which, we are told, the first Gentile Christians were advised to abstain (Acts XV, 20,29; XXI, 25). They were to abstain not only ‘from blood’, that is from meat killed by any method other than that of blood-letting, but also from the flesh of animals from which the blood had been drawn in any way other than that sanctioned by the Jewish authorities of the time.”

Resch argues that the tract Chullin is late. So it is; and so also is a great deal of the confirmatory evidence which is brought to bear upon Jewish allusions in Philo. We do not happen to be in possession of the intermediate links; but the coincidences with Philo are enough to show that they must at one time have existed. And, in like manner, the coincidence with Acts, or the reading in Acts, is enough to verify the usage which lies behind it.

Another explanation, on rather different lines, of the terms of the Decree is given by Dr. Chase in his Hulsean Lectures on The Credibility of the Acts (London, 1902; p. 96 f.) Dr. Chase and the authorities whom he follows suppose that the offence lay not so much in breaches of the Law that might be caused by Aryan indifference as in the deliberate idolatries of Semitic paganism. I will let him too speak in his own words.

„The true interpretation, as I venture to think, was substantially given long ago by a Cambridge scholar of the seventeenth century, Dean Spencer, in his *De Legibus*

Hebraeorum. It is hinted at, and receives in fact abundant illustration, in the works of an adopted son of Cambridge never to be mentioned without reverence, Professor Robertson Smith. All four words alike refer to rites and accompaniments of idolatrous worship. The words „thing offered unto idols“, standing at the head of the clause, rule the meaning of the two terms, „blood“ and „things strangled“, which follow. They both refer to rites current among heathen Semites, „blood“ possibly to the „rite of blood-brotherhood“, „still known in the Lebanon and in some parts of Arabia“; „things strangled“, to certain sacrifices referred to in Isaiah, possibly connected with mystic initiations. These practices are chosen for special prohibition, partly because they prevailed in Syria (the letter is addressed to Churches in Antioch and Syria, partly because they were peculiarly abhorrent to Jewish feeling“.

I must leave the decision between the alternative hypotheses to those who are more expert in Semitic matters than I am. For my present purpose it is enough that in either case the possibility of the Eastern readings in the Acts is, as I conceive it is, abundantly safeguarded.

This however is on the narrow ground of the objection taken to the particular expression *πικτόν*. In the answer I have ventured to give to it I find myself after the fact in full agreement (e. g.) with Prof. A. Seeberg. But in what follows I am afraid that I shall have to part company not only with him but with others of his countrymen; indeed I am conscious that I shall seem to lapse into a position altogether insular.

Harnack, in the argument from which we started, assumed as a matter of course that if the Apostolic Decree really had reference to distinctions of food its substance must be given up as necessarily unhistorical. Prof. A. Seeberg is equally clear on this head. He regards the decree as in such fundamental contradiction with the teaching of Christ (in Mark. VII, 1—23 and parallels), with the Epistles of St. Paul and that to the Hebrews, with the incident recorded in Gal. II, 11 ff. and with the subsequent history of the second century — if there had been any such definite precept to refer to, there would not have been such variety of practice as we find existing — that no

such decision as that which St. Luke records can ever have been agreed to. If we go back to older works, like Zeller on the Acts, the argument may be found set out at length with the utmost precision, as though it might be embodied in a series of propositions of Euclid. It is against this whole method that I desire to protest, even though I may be thought to betray my insularity by doing so. I shall at least go to the length of maintaining that the method is far too lightly and inconsiderately applied and with an undue degree of confidence in its results. I base this contention upon a famous aphorism of Bacon's: *subtilitas naturae subtilitatem sensus et intellectus multis partibus superat*. The argument assumes that, given certain data — certain conditions or certain motives —, certain acts will necessarily follow; whereas I should maintain that experience shows that as a matter of fact such consequences do not necessarily follow, but that unforeseen accidents or influences are constantly coming in to disturb and deflect the straight line of causation; if we could assume an exhaustive knowledge of all the causes at work, we might be able to predict what their effect would be, and argue backwards from the absence of a particular effect to the absence of a particular cause; but in point of fact our knowledge rarely is of this exhaustive and exclusive kind, and our inferences or calculations are thus often thrown out.

It will be better to argue in the concrete than in the abstract; and I shall therefore try to sketch an outline of the course which it seems to me that events may have taken on the supposition that the Eastern text of the decree is correct and that such a decree was really drawn up and issued very much in the way described in the Acts. I leave it an open question whether St. Luke himself gave its form to the decree or had access to some copy of the original document. It seems to me paradoxical to hold, with Seeberg (*op. cit.* pp. 85—92), that Peter's speech and the discussion at the Council generally rests on good authority but that the decree is a fiction. It would be easier to verify the decree than the speeches, and St. Luke when in Palestine in the company of St. Paul would have had no difficulty in verifying it. I merely leave this for the

present as a possibility. We need first to try to grasp the situation as a whole.

The dominating point in this, the real gist of the controversy, is the question as to the relation of Jew and Gentile when the Gentile becomes a Christian. On what terms are they to mix together in common social and religious intercourse?

We have to realize at the outset that anything like free intercourse and free communion is opposed to all the instincts and habits of the Jew. He had to overcome those instincts, and to waive those habits, before he could really welcome the Gentile as a brother in the faith. We are ourselves on the side of the Gentile; we take our stand on the principle of Mark VII, and look back impatiently at all those distinctions of clean and unclean as though they ought never to have existed. With the Jew it was very different. He had been brought up in them from childhood, and they had become almost a second nature. The inherited usage of centuries had generated in him a kind of physical distaste. He could not sit at table with one who simply ignored all the things about which he was so punctilious. We are to think not so much of intellectual scruples as of the sort of physical shrinking which civilized people would experience at some gross breach of cleanliness or good manners.

Another point that we have to realize is that these scruples took varied forms, and were felt some more and some less strongly in degree. There was a constant tendency among the Rabbis to lengthen the chain of prohibitions, but on the other hand those who were thrown much in company with Gentiles would have had their angles rather worn down. Some things stood out as more „indispensable“ (τὰ ἐπ'ἀνάγκης) than the rest; especially all that was connected with the root-principle of the Mosaic Law — which was indeed older than the Law of Moses (Gen. IX, 4) — the avoidance of blood. The avoidance of „things strangled“ is only a special case of this. It is almost superfluous to look for examples: where the application of a principle lay so near at hand, it was sure to be made. Besides, as we have seen, the decree itself, even if the reading were wrong, would be sufficient evidence for it; these are not

the sort of things that busy-bodies go out of their way needlessly to invent.

There is indeed ample evidence, as may be seen both from Resch and from A. Seeberg, as to the variety of practice spoken of above. We may gather from the *Didache* (VI, 3) that the rule in practice was, Be as careful — i. e. in regard to intercourse, as considerate — as you can.

Of the Jewish scruples St. James was the natural spokesman. If we may believe tradition, he was himself a rigorist even of an extreme kind (Eus. II 23). But he was also a sincere Christian; and it was one thing to take the full „yoke of the law“ upon himself, and another thing to impose it upon others. He singled out the points on which he laid most stress, and embodied them in the decree. I do not doubt that St. James took the initiative in all this; St. Peter and St. Paul were just consenting parties. It is probable enough that St. Paul gave what was really a careless consent; he was indifferent to such matters, but at least he would not stand in the way of an agreement that made for peace.

What lends especial verisimilitude to the whole arrangement is that it was possible and natural just at the time to which it is referred in the Acts, and not earlier or except for a few years later (cf. Acts XXI, 18—26). Before the occasion for the decree (Acts XV, 1 ff.) the question of the Gentile converts had been in no way pressing. From the time when St. James was murdered and the Church of Jerusalem had taken flight to Pella, Jewish Christianity had no longer an influential centre which held the casting vote on all matters of Church order. Indeed from the Council onwards the Mother Church had been losing every year in relative importance; with the death of St. James and break up of the local Church on the outbreak of war it dropped suddenly to little above zero. There must have been few Churches left where the balance of Jew and Gentile was so nearly even, or where the Jewish minority retained so much of its old precedence that it had to be greatly considered. The decree was only addressed in the first instance to a limited area; and I can well believe that it

soon fell into comparative disuse even within that area. It is true that, as we read it in the Acts, the decree has the appearance of a very authoritative document. Something of this appearance may be due to a mistaken estimate on the part of St. Luke himself. I am quite prepared to admit this so far as it may be right to do so. I am prepared for the proof — though I am by no means clear that it has yet been proved — that St. Luke gave its shape to the decree as we have it, drawing only upon oral tradition. But, even so, we are apt to read into it rather more than it really means. I have no doubt that the hand which drafted it in the first instance was the hand of James. For one besides who gave an active consent to it I suspect that there were not a few others — at least St. Paul and most of his party — whose consent was only passive. „It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us“ is no doubt a high sounding phrase: I suspect it means that there were prophets in the assembly, who had played some part as such in its deliberations. For the moment the decree had a real significance; it meant a united Christendom, instead of a disunited. I can well believe that Judas and Silas were zealous to communicate it, and that, where there had been heart-burnings before, it was received with relief and joy. Many an official document has had a temporary success of this kind, which the course of events has soon caused to become a dead letter. That was really the fate of the decree. The tide of events ebbed away from it, and it was left on the beach stranded and lifeless — lifeless at least for the larger half of the Church, for that Gentile Church which soon began to advance by leaps and bounds.

Two questions remain in detail. The first is as to the relation of the decree to the scene at Antioch described in Gal. II, 11 ff. There is a *prima facie* difficulty in harmonizing what is said about this scene in Galatians with the assumption that there could be anything to prevent St. Peter from eating with Gentiles, supposing that the terms of the decree were observed.

The completest answer would be supplied by the view of

Augustine, Schneckenburger, Zahn (*Galaterbrief* p. 110 ff., *N. kirchl. Ztschr.* 1894, pp. 435 ff.), and — independently of all these — C. H. Turner (art. „Chronology of N. T.“ in *Hastings DB.* I, 424), that the scene at Antioch preceded, instead of following, the Council of Jerusalem. If we could suppose this, the whole course of the history would run more smoothly. As Mr. Turner points out, the emissaries of James (*Gal.* II, 12) would be happily identified with the „certain men . . from Judaea“ of Acts XV, 1; and, as Zahn has shown, the conduct both of these people and of Peter would be more intelligible. On the common view it seems as much out of keeping with the compact previously mentioned in Galatians as with the decree in the Acts. On the other hand, there is really no note of time in Galatians to make the dispute at Antioch necessarily follow the Council. St. Paul might quite well be „harking back“ in memory to an incident that occurred before he went up to Jerusalem.

I confess that to me this solution is so attractive as to seem almost probable. I certainly do not think that in any case it can be excluded. There is nothing to make the sequence in Galatians stringently a sequence of time. But if the events are to be taken in the order in which they stand, still I cannot think that the few summary sentences in Galatians really negative the historical character of the decree. The line drawn in the decree is a fine one, and yet practice and sentiment are subtler than theory and precept. We are too ignorant of the circumstances to be justified in saying that no question could arise which the decree would not cover. Allowance must be made for long habit and prejudice over and above anything that could be set down in black and white. Where stubborn Gentile met stubborn Jew relations would not adjust themselves all at once; and the mediator who is in the midst between strong partisans may easily be blown first to one side and then to the other.

As to any further difficulty from St. Paul's treatment of meats offered in sacrifice to idols in 1 Corinthians, I confess that I think little of it. We must remember what manner of man St. Paul was. We must think of him as he paints him-

self for us in the first chapter of Galatians. He prides himself on his independence, and we cannot doubt that he was independent to a fault. Taken with the whole of its context I cannot think that I have gone too far in describing his consent to the decree as a passive consent. What it amounted to was that he would not fight the points at issue with convinced Jews where they had a claim to be considered. He could upon occasion, as he himself tells us, become a Jew to the Jews (1. Cor. IX, 20). But the decree, we may be sure, made no impression upon his mind. It „contributed nothing“ to his Gospel. It was no outcome of his religious principles. It was just a practical concordat, valid in certain specified regions and under certain definite conditions. But when he was altogether outside these (so to speak) upon his own hearth, among his own converts, he dealt with them by his own methods, and without any thought of the authorities at Jerusalem. My reply to those who are so quick to find „contradictions“ is that they think of St. Paul too much as an abstract writer of letters and founder of churches, and not enough as a living man.

It is just because Harnack is not as a rule one of those who do this, because as a rule he has shown himself superior to those who demand a pedantic uniformity, that I have hopes that he may see his way to combine his old view as to the text of Acts XV. 20, 29 with his newer view as to the historical value of the chapter to which these verses belong. I cannot think that the Western text of these verses or of Acts XXI, 25 is right, and yet I feel under no necessity to conclude either that the Council of Jerusalem was not really held or that the decree ascribed to it was not really passed.

This is the main substance of what I have to offer to those who have honoured me with the invitation to contribute to this volume. But before I close I would ask leave to add a few remarks on the last paragraph which Harnack has appended to his treatise. He has finished the detailed investigation in which he has been engaged, and he turns round to those on whose side he feels that he has been for the most part arguing — broadly speaking, I might say, the party represented in this

volume. He mentions in particular, as it was natural that he should mention, four names, Blass, Ramsay, Weiss and Zahn. He admits frankly that his own conclusions not only approximate to, but to a large extent coincide with, theirs. But at the same time he goes on to guard himself, with no less frankness, against being supposed to agree with them further than he does. We are left to infer that the agreement is more or less accidental and upon the surface, while the differences are in principle. He instances more particularly the question of miracle, and he goes on to pass some rather trenchant criticisms upon those whom he has mentioned.

Now I will take upon myself to say that we in England — not all, but a rather large proportion of the accredited teachers of theology in the Universities — are in the main with those in whose company I am writing, and against Harnack, in this matter. I should say perhaps, not so much against Harnack as against the school for which he speaks in this paragraph — for I gladly recognize that Harnack himself is nearer to us, and less committed to the shibboleths of the school, than many others. But, if I may venture to interpret the thoughts of the English contingent, it would be to some such effect as this. I conceive that the chief difference which separates us from our opponents is that we are more conscious of tentativeness both in our methods and in our conclusions, especially upon the highest matters. We count not ourselves to have attained; we do not wish to speak in a dogmatic or ex cathedra tone. We are well aware, and we never cease to be aware, that there lies before us a great expanse of mystery which we are doing our very best to explore, but which we believe can only be explored by slow degrees; and in the meantime we do not like to lay down sweeping propositions which we feel would only check and hamper us in our explorations.

I will illustrate my meaning by two points in this paragraph of Harnack's. Among those from whom he thinks himself divided is my countryman Sir W. M. Ramsay; and he is divided from him, because he places „his living apprehension and his great learning at the service of a method which seeks to squeeze

out of the sources more than they really contain". My friend Ramsay is a strong man, and like other strong men he takes a line of his own; I would rather speak, not so much for him as for my own understanding of him. I confess that to me too he seems sometimes to be a little too much of a rigorist, to insist rather too much upon the negative, as well as upon the positive, side of his own contentions; I am inclined to think that he has done this in regard to some aspects of the larger question a part of which I have been discussing, the Apostolic Council. I discount this somewhat, because I take it to be only the natural expression of a strong grasp and strong conviction. But for myself I do not suppose, and I doubt if Ramsay for his part supposes, that all his constructions will be taken absolutely *au pied de la lettre*. He knows that he is going beyond his evidence and that his construction cannot be verified in every part. In regions of history where materials are scanty and positive proof often unattainable, it is frequently necessary to eke out results by the help of the historical imagination. Sir W. M. Ramsay is gifted beyond most of us with this form of imagination, and he possesses the best basis for it in a profound knowledge of ancient life. I should therefore — again speaking for myself — be very unwilling to deprecate his excursions into the imaginative field. He has taught us in England by the way a vast amount that we have been exceedingly glad to learn; indeed he has helped us, more than any one else, to understand what a living apprehension of ancient life means.

The other difference on which I will touch is still more comprehensive. We are told that some of us — I venture to say „us", because I am heart and soul with those who come under the criticism — „are dependent upon presuppositions in regard to the Canon of the New Testament, some upon the conviction that miracles have really happened, and some on both at once". I should like to go into these charges at length and in detail, because it is only in detail that a proper understanding can be arrived at in regard to them. I myself firmly believe that there is something *sui generis* in the New Testament; I believe that the Inspiration of the Bible is a real thing,

and not a mere fiction; and yet I think that on this head I could come to terms with Prof. Harnack if I had time. I should not be quite so confident on the subject of miracles; but if the objection to them were presented in the positive form that the universe is governed by general laws, I should cordially agree. What I really demur to is the use that is often made of such sweeping propositions as that „miracles do not happen“, to foreclose questions that ought not to be foreclosed but diligently and patiently examined. I should like, if I may, to quote in regard to this an admirable passage in Dr. Zahn's recent commentary on the Fourth Gospel (p. 39):

„Die sehr begreifliche, für so viele unüberwindliche Abneigung gegen die Anerkennung der geschichtlichen Wirklichkeit von Ereignissen, wie sie II, 1–11; VI, 1–21; XI, 1–44; XX, 1–29 erzählt sind, sollte für den kritischen Literarhistoriker endlich doch aufhören, als ausreichender Grund für die Behauptung zu gelten, dass ein Jünger Jesu das 4. Ev. nicht geschrieben haben könne. Denn wer das so begründete Urteil über dieses eine Buch aufrecht erhalten will, muss konsequenterweise verneinen, was doch nicht zu leugnen ist, dass dieselben oder doch ganz gleichartige Geschichten zu Lebzeiten von mehr als einem der zwölf Apostel und leiblichen Brüder Jesu und von Hunderten seiner Jünger (1. Kr. XV, 6), also auch nicht ohne deren zustimmendes Zeugnis in allen Christengemeinden erzählt und geglaubt worden sind. Er müsste aus dem gleichen Grunde auch bestreiten, dass Paulus die Briefe an die Römer und Korinther geschrieben habe, in welchem er versichert, dass er wie die anderen Apostel in seinem Berufsleben Ereignisse erlebt habe und durch sie auch vor seinen Gegnern als Apostel legitimiert worden sei, welche er nicht nur Zeichen und Krafftaten, sondern auch portenta und prodigia (τέρατα) nennt, 2. Kr. XII, 12; Rm. 15. 19 cf. Hb. II, 4; Jo. IV, 48. Wem sein geschichtlich gebildeter Geschmack solche literarische Machtsprüche verbietet, ohne dass er sich den unbegrenzten Wunderglauben Jesu und seiner ersten Gemeinde (Mr. IX, 23; XI, 22f.; 1. Kr. XIII, 2) aneignen könnte, muss alles Ernstes versuchen, sich und anderen begreiflich zu machen, wie diese wundergläubige Betrachtung selbsterlebter Ereignisse entstehen könnte. Nur vermenge man diese schwierige Aufgabe nicht mit den Aufgaben der literarischen Kritik“.

I cannot think that, even from Harnack's point of view, a statement like this is open to any reasonable exception. If it is carefully weighed, I think it will show how easily conservative scholars may be credited with opinions that do not at all do justice to them. It certainly does not bear out the impression of its author which Harnack's criticism would seem to convey. For my own part I must needs think his cautious self-restrained methods far better than the hasty dogmatism („Macht-sprüche") which — as on this question of miracle — is so ready to cut the knots that it cannot untie. I do not really identify Harnack with this kind of haste, though he does sometimes come near it. His recent work, more particularly, has been on such excellent lines that I should like to think of him as an ally, even though he does not allow himself to be called one.

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